

# JESUS AS EVANGELIST

*Evangelism is what the church does. It is not an extra effort; it is the natural consequence of what is received.*

By Ted Krey

**J**esus, as evangelist, begins His earthly ministry by traveling the dusty roads of Galilee and preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). The Sower sows recklessly, throwing out the seed far and wide so it might fall on all kinds of soil.

Jesus is in the boat as He teaches the multitudes. He is on the mountainside; He travels from town to town and even crosses barriers by going into Samaria and speaking to a Samaritan woman. He sends out the seventy-two with the Word so that even more might hear. He brings along an apostolic band of twelve disciples, later turned apostles.

This is what the church does. It is not an extra effort.

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Rather, the Gospel that seeks free course obliges the church to be out and about in its evangelization of all people. By examining the actions of Jesus as evangelist, we will tease out a few implications for the pastor as evangelist.

Jesus preaches repentance as He begins His ministry; hearts are hard. Idols are firmly lodged. An evangelist needs to be an excellent listener and ask questions that assist him in ascertaining the idols firmly lodged in the hearts of others. Only then can he call them to turn in repentance from their sinful love for a creature or thing to the living Jesus who freely offers the forgiveness of sins. Unbelief means the evangelist preaches the law to the dry bones (Ezek. 37), which require the refreshing breath of the Holy Spirit who puts bone to bone, muscle to muscle, and tendon to tendon, blowing where and when He wishes (John 3:8), breathing new life into those who were previously dead in their trespasses and sins.

Jesus wants the seed to fall on all the soil. An

evangelist, unlike God, does not know the hearts of those to whom He brings the precious Gospel seed. This seed, which is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, is for all people. The evangelist knows that Jesus gives Himself over into death for the sake of everyone. But he cannot discern between the rocky soil and the good soil. Sometimes, we don’t know what to make of the soil.

The evangelist today can throw out the seed to a wide audience through biblical content on websites and podcasts, in sermons, and in theological papers. Many seek spiritual guidance on the internet. Cults and sects ought not to have an exclusive domain here. Using the internet to connect others with historic Lutheranism, as is done by our evangelists in Puerto Rico, is one means to reach an extended audience for Jesus and to cast the seed far and wide.

Jesus, as evangelist, teaches from the boat as the multitudes press in on Him. He enlists others to assist Him by borrowing the boat and having them keep Him in one place so that He can speak to the multitude. For the modern-day evangelist, asking a baseball manager or volleyball coach if a Saturday morning practice or a Tuesday evening tournament might be a platform to cast out seed could bring surprising results in terms of borrowing a boat to speak to a multitude.

Jesus, as evangelist, is on the move, as the Word itself seeks its own course and needs to be spoken. Jesus is in Galilee, later in Samaria, then in Jerusalem, Capernaum, and later on the road to Emmaus. An evangelist desires an entrance with the Word wherever there might be an opportunity.

Perhaps a professor teaches a class on ethics, and an opportunity exists to tell the Gospel. Maybe the funeral directors in town are looking for clergy who are open to a phone call in difficult situations. Perhaps the neighboring town has a parade, fair, or carnival, and the opportunity









Photo: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Jana Ingelhart

*Rev. Ted Krey discusses mission work with students from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, in the spring of 2024. The students visited the Dominican Republic on a short-term mission education trip organized by the LCMS Office of International Mission.*

exists to be present and speak the Word at an intersection of life where many people meet. Maybe the immigrant community needs to learn English, and the evangelist can encourage half a dozen individuals to teach English using Scripture. Regardless of the opportunity, the Word needs to be spoken in that place and prayers offered to the Lord that the Holy Spirit would grant courage and a ready mouth to confess.

When Jesus retreated to a place of solitude, the multitudes pressed in, yet even there, He had compassion and spent the day teaching the multitudes, for this Gospel refreshes both those who preach and those who hear. An evangelist need not think that the task is all his; again, Jesus enlists the disciples to look for solutions, feed the people, and gather the fragments. Retreating for intercessory prayer on behalf of unbelievers and reflecting on the Scriptures is necessary. Pastors can do this alone, or they can retreat with others. Whatever the case, they are praying to the Father of all mercy to work powerfully through His Gospel and Spirit on behalf of those who have heard and those who have not yet believed.

Jesus, as evangelist, crosses barriers going into Samaria. The Gospel knows no barriers. The evangelist does not reach out; instead, he *goes* out. This is what the church does. It is not an extra effort; it is the natural consequence of what is received.

In the Divine Service, Jesus gives Himself through preaching and the reception of the Sacrament for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of His people. His people are sent out in their respective vocations as the

baptized to bear witness to Jesus in their families, at work, and in their leisure time. Likewise, the pastor goes out as a chaplain to serve the police, firefighters, and senior citizens. Both pastor and people live out their God-given vocations as those sent into the world to tell, invite, and offer the Gospel and bring those who have heard to the church so that they might be disciplined by Jesus through His Word and Sacraments.

Jesus, as evangelist, prepares His disciples for three years to be apostles, “sent ones,” bringing His Gospel to Israel and the world. Seminaries disciple men to go out as evangelists to talk about Jesus in His Gospel. Pastors are evangelists and need to intentionally go out into their communities. In Brazil and the Dominican Republic, seminary formation involves intentional evangelistic weekly visits to hospitals, prisons, people with disabilities, and immigrant communities, and especially those who have not yet heard. In the Dominican seminary, men spend fifteen to twenty hours a week as evangelists knocking on doors, doing Bible studies, and visiting schools to spread the Gospel, so that they develop an ease in speaking with unbelievers and learn to convey the Gospel so that those who have not heard might repent, believe, and believing call on the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins.

This is what the church does. ▲



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